Tells the Facts and Names the Names

CounterPunch

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If We Had A Rocket Launcher...

"With great wisdom and courage, this government decided that however great the dimensions of this disaster, it would not heap disaster upon disaster by abandoning course." IMF managing director Michael Camdessus, after meeting Nicaraguan president Arnoldo Aleman in Managua and praising him for sticking with an IMF-designed austerity plan.

Ten Good Groups That Make a Difference

Here at CounterPunch we get the same querries from you many times a month: tell us where the good groups are. You want to know who's worth supporting. And so now, in our final issue of the year, just in time for you to make tax-deductible contributions that could truly work wonders, we give you some groups we know are doing fine things. As always, our search for these groups has told us that there's never a dearth of capable organizers fired with high ideals, never a national horizon that doesn't somewhere blaze forth victories great and small.

The **Southern Center for Human Rights**, an anti-death penalty group, performs heroic feats on a budget of about $650,000 per year. That money supports a staff of 16, including nine attorneys, none that is paid more than $25,000 per year. In 1998, the Center saved the lives of a number of people facing the death penalty, including that of Floyd Hill, who was sentenced to death in Cobb County, Georgia in 1981 for allegedly killing a police officer. Hill has always maintained his innocence and there were no direct witnesses to the crime. Lawyers for the Center finally won a new trial for Hill in March when the 11th US Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the district attorney who prosecuted the case, Tom Charron, had flouted the trial judge's repeated warnings not to refer to Hill's refusal to talk to police before seeing an attorney. (The Supreme Court ruled in 1976 that silence at the time of arrest cannot be used against a defendant during trial.) Another big victory came with a Center lawsuit that won compensation for prisoners abused by guards in Georgia. The suit involved several raids made on state prisons during which unresisting and restrained inmates were savagely beaten by guards ("Blood went up the wall," one guard, not involved in the beatings, testified. "Blood went all over the wall, all over the inmate. I heard a sickening, cracking sound.") Damages won by the Center, $283,000, are the largest ever paid by the Georgia Department of Corrections. In a case that has yet to be decided, the Center also filed suit last year against Alabama's Loxley Community Work Center over its practice of incarcerating up to 11 prisoners in an 8 x 10 "holding cell" for stretches of several weeks. The cell has no windows or ventilation system and inmates' uniforms, sheets and mattresses are not cleaned, even after covered with dirt and sweat. A prisoner kept in the cell for one week had to be rushed to the hospital with severe dehydration.

Southern Center for Human Rights,
83 Poplar Street NW, Atlanta, Georgia,
30303, 404-688-1202

Up in Fairbanks, Alaska a small environmental group is fighting one of the biggest battles of the decade: the move to open the vast and untrammeled US National Petroleum Reserve to oil drilling. The **Northern Alaska Environmental Center** maintains a small staff and a hardy corps of volunteers, ranging from trappers and back-to-the-land types to Inuits, botanists and former oil pipeline workers. The challenge ahead of them is formidible. Arco, Exxon, Chevron and British Petroleum have steamrolled the Clinton administration into giving the green light for the oil giants to begin exploration in the heart of the 24-million acre reserve. Through this process, the Northern Alaska Center has been nearly alone on the frontlines, attacking the Administration's cash-driven capitulation to big oil. "The Clinton Administration is operating in a vacuum", Sylvia Ward tells us. "They have no energy policy, except to extract whatever's left in the ground. It makes

(**Good Guys** *continued on page 5)*

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Our Little Secret

War on Rigoberta

There can be little doubt that the publishers of David Stoll's book, Rigoberta Menchu and the Story of all Poor Guatemalans are highly gratified at the readiness of the New York Times, in a front-page "special report" by Larry Rohter subtitled "Tarnished Laureate" published on December 15, to adopt so enthusiastically their thinly-veiled innuendos and allegations. The book, they wrote, was about a "living legend, a young Guatemalan orphaned by death squads who said that her odyssey from a Mayan Indian village to revolutionary exile was 'the story of all poor Guatemalans'. Published in the autobiographical I, Rigoberta Menchu, her words brought the Guatemalan army's atrocities to world attention and propelled her to the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize".

But, they imply, their author had dug up another story entirely. I Rigoberta Menchu was "not the eyewitness account it purported to be" but rather a story edited by Elizabeth Burgos which the Nobel laureate has "seemed to repudiate" and which "served the ideological needs of the urban left'" Indeed, this tendentious tale is responsible for "caricaturing the complex feelings of Guatemalan Indians towards the guerrillas" and having "shaped the assumptions of human rights activists and the new multicultural orthodoxy in North American universities." The book's presence on college reading lists has pained many conservatives, such as C. Vann Woodward, who once derided I Rigoberta Minchu in the New York Review of Books as the work of "an unlettered Indian woman".

As it happens, anyone who actually reads David Stoll's book, published by Westview and allegedly based on many years' research, soon finds that these tantalising allegations are not borne out. For starters Stoll discovered that I,Rigoberta Menchu is exactly the book it claimed to be. Elizabeth Burgos, the Venezuelan writer and anthropologist who edited the book from twenty-seven hours of interviews with Rigoberta in 1982, had produced a text very faithful to the interview tapes which she allowed Stoll to listen to. Burgos encouraged Rigoberta to speak at length and without interruption. She did, however, urge her to explain her cultural background and the customs of her people. Some of this material was then spliced into the narrative at appropriate points and digressions trimmed. But the words and emphasis of the book were Rigoberta's. The New York Times's insinuation that the book was somehow scripted by the "urban left" with their romantic notions of peasants and violence is quite at odds with the actual account Stoll offers.

The New York Review once derided Menchu as "an unlettered Indian woman".

Both Elizabeth Burgos and Rigoberta Menchu made it clear from the outset that they had a political purpose in the book and that was to expose the atrocities committed by the Guatemalan army. Rigoberta made it perfectly clear that she was an active member of a peasant organisation and guerrilla group. Her account was not the fruit of some judicial investigation striving to be fair to the landlords and army officers. It was based on her own experiences and those of close relatives and friends.

From the New York Times it might seem that it is these very claims which have now been contradicted. Have their intrepid reporters, after several intensive days of questioning neighbours and relatives, really discovered the book to be "all lies" as they quote someone saying? Is it, perhaps, the case that half Rigoberta's family was not killed and that the army was not massacring thousands of peasants? In fact nothing of the sort emerges either from Stoll's book or from the reporter's story. Instead, what they do is query details of Rigoberta's account or claims that she personally was present at all the killings she describes. They also mount an attack on Rigoberta's transparently metaphorical claim to tell the story of "all poor Guatemalans".

Both The Times and Stoll, though the former far more blatantly than the latter, write on the implicit assumption that if Rigoberta's account does not square at all points with those of someone else then Rigoberta must be lying. For example she describes how her brother Petrocinio was captured by the army and burnt in front of other family members whereas the reporter finds another brother who says it was not like that at all; in fact Petrocinio was kidnapped, kept in a hole and shot. Two other younger brothers of the laureate had died of disease and malnutrition but a family member is quoted to the effect that Rigoberta could not have witnessed this and it had happened before she was born.

The New York Times reporter claims that Rigoberta was not as poor as she makes herself out to be and that she attended a "prestigious boarding school". Rigoberta did mention living in a convent in I Rigoberta Menchu and also her time working as a maid. Stoll's researches bear out that she worked as a maid at the convent school, being allowed to attend some classes at the same time.

It seems quite likely that Menchu, speaking in a Paris flat in 1982, edited her own account, appropriating stories she had been told by others, highlighting her own hardships and presenting an unsympathetic portrait of her enemies. In an oral culture the distinction between what has happened to oneself and what has happened to close relatives or friends may not be so clear cut. Rigoberta was not giving evidence in a court of law; she was trying

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to explain how bad the situation was in her country for her people and to do so as vividly as possible.

The affected naivety belongs not to those who have lauded Rigoberta's book but to those who now seek to discredit it. Did they really suppose that because she was a Guatemalan peasant she was incapable of rhetoric and metaphor? Or are Western journalists the only ones who are allowed local color? And only Western politicians the arts of spin-doctoring? At no point is evidence offered that Rigoberta invented the blood-soaked plight of her people and country, even if her account of it was a partial one.

David Stoll ventures a substantial political criticism but is equally unable to make it stick. He claims that Rigoberta was romanticising a guerrilla force whose activities had brought appalling violence to the region where she grew up, much of it intra-communal in nature. The curious aspect of this criticism is that, once again, an attentive reader of I Rigoberta Menchu would have grasped both the huge human cost of the guerrilla war and the fact that it often pitted indios against ladinos rather than peasants against landlords - these categories overlapping at points but being by no means identical.

It is alleged that Rigoberta and Elizabeth Burgos were engaged in romanticising the guerrillas. In fact, what the two women were really embarked on was an effort to change the terms of the struggle. By telling her story as effectively as possible Rigoberta was indeed doing something which the guerrilla commanders had failed to encompass. She was putting the Army's brutal regime on the defensive. The eventual decision of the government to negotiate with the guerrillas was in part fruit of this successful moral campaign. All that Stoll can offer against this are some nauseating insinuations familiar to anyone who has studied the rationalizations of US-sponsored extirmination campaigns, that it was the guerillas who are somehow responsible for the Guatemalan army's genocidal violence.

At the end of his book Stoll almost admits that: "Even if it is not the eyewitness account it claims to be, that does not detract from its significance. Her story has helped shift perceptions of indigenous people from hapless victims to men and women fighting for their rights. The recognition she has won is helping Mayas become conscious of themselves as historical actors. To many ladinos as well as Mayas, Rigoberta is a national symbol and will continue to be one, however many vicissitudes she suffers because she is a living one." If he had taken these conclusions a little more seriously Stoll might have written a work less inviting of sensationalist exploitation. And he might have dropped that unqualified phrase "not an eyewitness account" since he does not deny that Rigoberta witnessed much that she relates, nor that there are other sorts of truth to be found in her story. The last sentence of Stoll's book attempts to mimic a Maya myth: "The story Rigoberta gave her people can be chopped to pieces, like some of her neighbours were during the violence, but it will grow back together again, and maybe Guatemala will too."

No evidence is offered that Menchu invented the blood-soaked plight of her people.

Freedom Spells B-A-K-U

One of our favorite targets for 1998, and for all years, is the conservative "human rights" group Freedom House. Last year, we reported on how Freedom House was lauding the supposed gains for human rights in the Ukraine at just about the same time that a major Freedom House executive, Mark Palmer, was entering into lucrative business deals in that country.

Now, it seems a similar charade is taking place in Azerbaijan, where U.S. oil companies are slavering over vast oil and gas reserves. A whole host of former government officials are helping the oil companies get a foot in the door in Azerbaijan, including former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. Zbig is on the payroll of Amoco, the largest US investor in Azerbaijan's oil fields, which could produce 3 million barrels per day by 2010.

One of Brzezinski's tasks for Amoco is to improve the image of Azerbaijan and its president, Geidar Aliyev. This is no easy feat as Aliyev's regime is guilty of terrible human rights violations. Furthermore, Congress has been much more sympathetic to Armenia, with which Azerbaijan fought a bloody war a few years back.

But Brzezinski has fallen to his task with relish. The New York Times interviewed him last year when it was preparing a major story on Azerbaijan and he told the newspaper that Aliyev is "a real cool cat". Last July, Brzezinski testified before Congress that Azerbaijan and other former Soviet republics had lived under communist rule for seven decades and should not be expected to establish democracies in a short period of time. (Brzezinski expressed far less understanding about the need to transition to democracy after the Sandinistas overthrew the Somoza regime in Nicaragua.)

Zbig also sits on the board of Freedom House, which has become one of Aliyev's most fervent supporters. Last year, Azerbaijan was one of only two countries that Freedom House elevated from the category of "not free" to "partly free", an improvement which Azerbaijan and the oil companies have been using on Capitol Hill to win support for Aliyev. Freedom House claims that it moved Azerbaijan up due to "the emergence of a more vibrant civic life" in the country. Meanwhile, Freedom House president Adrian "Sticky Fingers" Karatnycky money from the US Agency for International Development to travel to the capital of Baku on a fact-finding mission.

Here's another coincidence: after resigning from his post as national security adviser, Anthony Lake also took a position on the board of Freedom House. There's only one mystery that remains. What oil company payroll is Lake on?

Under One Roof

We're proud to share a publishing house with Rigoberta Menchu. Verso published the English-language edition of I, Rigoberta Menchu in 1984, and has just put out Crossing Borders, her new book. And Verso publishes the invaluable Whiteout: The CIA, Drugs and the Press (on the Los Angeles Times bestseller list in late November and early December), available to CounterPunch readers for $18, postage and handling included. By now, all of you who have ordered copies of Whiteout should have received your book. Also available at a discount is Ken Silverstein's stunning guide to Babylon, Washington on $10 Million a Day, for $14.

Take advantage now of these amazing offers, and in this season of joy and untrammeled generosity, never forget for an instant that donations to CounterPunch are tax-deductible. Onward to the New Year, with hopeful hearts and great expectations! ■

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He's The Employers' Darling

How Much Harm Can Hoffa Do?

The election of James P. Hoffa as president of the nation's largest union has been greeted by many on the left as nothing short of a disaster, though many of the Teamsters voting for the man did so in the expectation that he would bring added clout to the union in its dealings with the bosses. CounterPuncher JoAnn Wypijewski met a couple of Teamsters at a gathering of the Association for Union Democracy in New York, where one of them said, "I really think they [ie, the bosses] are going to be afraid of him". The record suggests this man be cruelly disappointed.

Before he took control of the Teamsters, James P. Hoffa was favored by Congressman Peter Hoekstra and other Republicans bent on choking off union spending in politics. Now Hoffa vows to support Republicans and create the biggest PAC in labor, because, he says, it's money that gets Congress's attention.

In his campaign against Tom Leedham and the Rank & File Power slate, Hoffa got the assist of management under Teamsters contract at UPS, Anheuser-Busch, Roadway, Strohs, USA Waste, Certified Grocers, Lipton Co., Fleming Foods, Price Club/Costco (and that's just the group that was reprimanded and fined by the court-appointed Election Officer). Now he pledges he'll usher forth a "new militancy" against employers. (This is the same man who first opposed the 1997 UPS strike and didn't have the nerve to debate Leedham.)

Following the annulled 1996 Teamsters election, federal monitors fined Hoffa's campaign almost $200,000 for filing false financial reports and forced "Junior" to sever his ties with the man behind the campaign's dirty tricks, Richard Leebove. Years earlier, Leebove was also one of the brains behind BLAST, a goon squad that physically assaulted reformers in Teamsters for a Democratic Union. Now Hoffa, whose own chicanery in 1996 is still under internal review, calls for an end to government oversight of the Teamsters and proposes to hire former FBI agents as the union's private investigators. It's not likely that those corrupt Teamster officials who either sponsored Hoffa or ran on his slate (men pulling down annual salaries to the tune of $468,407, $274,527, $225,000 and so on) would be the first targets of his "watchdog" efforts.

No question, Hoffa's victory is bad news all around, but one needs a sense of perspective. After all, he's not the only thug in organized labor. The others just operate under less of a spotlight. For some time now, there's been talk that a Hoffa takeover of the biggest union in the country could spell the end for the Sweeney team at the AFL-CIO. It's true that John Sweeney could not have risen to power in 1995 without the Teamsters, but this is not 1995; unseating an AFL-CIO establishment is not a simple project. Perhaps as insulation against a possible challenge, Sweeney got union delegates in 1997 to extend his term from two years to four, meaning his next election will be in 2001, the same year Hoffa has to defend his own seat. Sweeney didn't get where he is because he's a radical visionary or audacious leader but because he's an expert politician. After playing to his left the first two years or so of his tenure, he's lately been more conscientious about mollifying the right, the pork-choppers in the state federations of labor and the international unions who've had it with all the talk of organizing and "street heat," had it with the militants who threaten their comfortable way of doing business. Internal union democracy is not an issue for the AFL-CIO, whose first concern is to make sure no one defects. The Teamsters pay $7 million a year in per capita dues to the federation, a fact undoubtedly in the forefront of Sweeney's mind when, immediately after the election results were posted, he declared that Hoffa "has the potential to be a great leader". (For a sense of the turnaround, recall that Sweeney's second, AFL secretary-treasurer Richard Trumka, is still under investigation for shuttling money into Ron Carey's re-election campaign against Hoffa in 1996.)

He remains the darling of the Wall Street Journal, the friend of business, who's never organized a thing.

For rank-and-file democrats in the Teamsters, it's not the end of the world, either. The road to reform is a long one. The road to radical reform is longer still. When Ron Carey became Teamsters president in 1991, Teamsters for a Democratic Union found itself in a delicate position, almost as the party of the party in power. That had its up side—the Teamsters did become a fighting union—and down side, as loyalty required assent when "union democrat" came to mean anyone who won without rigging an election, anyone who supported Carey; as the "reform" label became so malleable that finally even Hoffa could wear it.

In the interim between Carey's disqualification and Hoffa's victory, TDU returned to organizing pitched challenges in local elections, winning control of many locals formerly in the hands of Hoffa men, and realizing that maybe it's time to pay a bit more attention to the union's marginalized ranks, particularly the low-wage Latinos under Teamsters contracts. In the presidential race, activists working the field for only five months held Hoffa to 55 percent of the vote, denying him his longed-for landslide. However ugly things get, too much has happened in the Teamsters for Hoffa to achieve total rollback. Right now, his mentor and former boss, Larry Brennan of Michigan, is being investigated for using members' dues to finance his own local election.

Two others from Hoffa's winning slate could also soon find themselves thrown out of their new jobs and maybe out of the union, one of them (Tom O'Donnell from Long Island) for hiring a convicted felon, paid through his wife, to work on the 1996 Hoffa campaign. But even if he and his cronies were suddenly to follow every law to the letter, Junior Hoffa is liable to make countless slips that disappoint the members.

He remains the darling of the Wall Street Journal, the friend of business bosses, a labor leader who's never organized a thing in his life. That's deep history, and for the reform crowd it heightens the political challenge, even more than the institutional one. ■

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(**Good Guys** *continued from page 1)*

all the high-minded talk about global warming ring hollow as a spent oil drum." Many of the national environmental groups have failed to put any muscle into the fight to save the largest swath of undeveloped land in North America. Why? Because they are anticipating a trade-off. By giving the Reserve to Arco, they feel they can secure protection for the smaller, but more high-profile Arctic Wildlife Reserve. But the Northern Alaska Center realizes that the oil companies want it all and the place to stop them is at the banks of the Colville River in the Reserve. The next year will determine the fate of this irreplaceable landscape.

Northern Alaska Environmental Center
218 Driveway Street
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701-2806
907-452-5021

Jobs with Justice works with labor, community and religious groups to organize campaigns for workers rights. Fred Azcarate at the group's office in Washington, DC tells us that 1998 was a good year, marked by local victories around the country. In Oregon, the County Council of Multnomah (which includes Portland) passed a living wage ordinance that requires companies that contract with the county to pay their workers at least $8.65 (if they offer benefits as well the companies can pay slightly less). In Washington state, JwJ helped mobilize support for an initiative that ensures the minimum wage is indexed to inflation. Voters approved the initiative handily in November. JwJ also helped organize support for nationwide bargaining campaigns that resulted in major contract gains for hundreds of thousands of workers employed by US West, Bell Atlantic and Southwestern Bell. In Massachusetts, JwJ helped workers win union recognition from two big, and violently anti-union, nursing home companies, Sun Health Systems and Genesis.

Jobs With Justice
501 3rd Street NW,
Washington, DC 20001
202-434-1106

The **Citizens' Truth Commission**, sponsored by the Institute for Policy Studies, is project is run by Martha Honey and Sanho Tree. "We are convening a panel of experts take testimony in Los Angeles and Baltimore on who's profiting and who's paying the price for the war on drugs," Martha Honey tells us. "Our intent is to map the drug and money laundering networks in these cities and the ties of government officials and police the police to the drug trade. There are two sides to the issue: the moving of drugs and the profiting from war on drugs." Hearings will be held in Los Angeles in March and in Baltimore later in the year. Honey said the Commission will also work with journalists to keep the story alive and to explore how the press failed this story in the past. Honey says the project needs volunteers.

Citizens Truth Commission
733 15th Street NW Suite 1020
Wasington, DC 20005
202-234-9382 ext. 266

Essential Information, a group founded by Ralph Nader, has notched up some impressive wins this year. Near the top of the list, says Rob Weissman, was Essential's successful effort (in coalition with a number of other groups) to block a move that would have given tobacco companies immunity from civil law suits. Weissman also points to a lobbying campaign by Essential that led the World Bank to review its support for siting medical waste incinerators in the Third World. Such incinerators account for one-half of all dioxin production in the North, and they are being phased out or heavily regulated. Hence, incinerator companies have begun dumping new facilities in the South, with the help, until now, of the World Bank and other international organizations. Thanks to Essential's lobbying campaign, which has been backed by Third World countries such as Haiti, Mozambique and South Africa, the Bank has agreed to rethink its policy. Weissman also pointed to two other victories that Essential can take some credit for: the federal government's surprising decision to pursue an anti-trust case against Microsoft and the Clinton administration's issuing of an executive order last September that commits the federal government to buying recycled paper. Because the government is the biggest single paper purchaser - the feds buy 19 billion sheets per year - the decision will have a major impact.

Essential Information,
PO Box 19405,
Washington, DC 20036,
202-387-8030

Though it can't take credit for the event, the fall of Indonesian dictator Suharto made 1998 an especially sweet year for the **East Timor Action Network**. The Network, which fights for self-determination for East Timor - which was invaded by Indonesia, with US backing, in 1975 — can take more direct credit for some important victories in Washington. In October, the House and Senate passed a law that bans the use of US-supplied weapons in East Timor and forbids the Pentagon from offering International Military Education Training to the Indonesian armed forces. Lynn Fredriksson, who works out of ETAN's DC office, says the bill's passage "could be the most support any Congress has shown for rights of East Timorese" since the invasion. A few months earlier, the Senate unanimously passed a resolution urging the Clinton administration to "support an internationally supervised referendum on self-determination". Even the State Department has begun to offer timid support for the Timorese. It now has an official position - though an unpublicized one - calling for the release of jailed resistance leader Xanana Gusmao and other political prisoners.

East Timor Action Network,
PO Box 1182
White Plains, NY 10602,
202-544-6911

Tim Saasta of the DC-based **Center for Community Change**, which helps local groups in low-income communities organize campaigns for housing, jobs and other critical issues, says 1998 has been "a year

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in which things started to reverse themselves. There's a lot of energetic work going on around the country, a lot of life out there." Saasta says an especially important win this year was buried in the Transportation bill, which set aside $750 million to be used to improve public transportation in poor neighborhoods. The bill also gives community groups an unprecedented role in helping develop plans for using all federal transportation money. The Center aided a local group in Los Angeles, which succeeded in forcing contractors on a major freeway project to set aside millions of dollars to train and hire low-income workers. The Center also helped win a number of victories in attempting to crack down on insurance redlining against poor neighborhoods. In one case, a jury in Richmond, Virginia ordered Nationwide Insurance Company to pay more than $100 million in damages to a local housing group which charged it with refusing to sell homeowner policies to black residents.

Center for Community Change
1000 Wisconsin Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20007
202-342-0567

For the past five years, Nike, one of the world's most profitable companies, has been relentlessly hounded by a fierce outfit called **Press for Change**, a group that fights for workers' rights around the world. Press for Change has exposed Nike's labor practices in its Asian factories. It has brought attention to the shoe-company's use of child labor, forced overtime, hazardous working conditions and sub-living wage payscales. They have also revealed the cozy ties the company cultivated with the Suharto regime in Indonesia. Working closely with other first-rate groups such as UNITE and Global Exchange, Press for Change has brought Nike and its egomaniacal president Phil Knight almost nearly to its knees. Nike's bottom line has suffered the worst losses in the company's history and Knight himself has been forced to make one concession after another. Many of Nike's fixes have been hollow and the press has often picked up on this because Press for Change's director Jeff Ballinger has been able to quickly point out the weak spots, such as the recent Nike-brokered "no sweat" labelling scam. The pummelling of Nike is one of the great triumphs of the year and no group played a greater role in the battle than Press for Change.

Press for Change
E-502
75 Cambridge Parkway
Cambridge, MA 02142
617- 496-0918

When other organizers sank down in their foxholes after Chiquita hit the Cincinnati Enquirer with a law suit and brought charges against its star reporter Mike Gallagher, the **Council on Hemispheric Affairs** held firm, kept the story available to the public on its website and explained to anyone who would listen that Gallagher's reporting had exposed for all to see the heinous behavior of a company that has caused untold misery across Latin America. For years the Council has also kept of the pressure on General Augusto Pinochet, demanding that the Chilean butcher be brought to justice for his bloody crimes. When organizations like Freedom House, and its director Adrian Karatnycky, took to the op-ed pages of the Wall Street Journal decrying the move to extradite the general, the Council effectively countered with a jolting reminder of the dictator's crimes.

"Look at the gap between the rich and poor," Larry Birns, the Council's president, tells us. "Throughout Latin America we see the greatest concentration of wealth in history. Next year we're also going to stress the bankruptcy of the policy on Cuba. The Clinton administration shows an absence of courage and rationality. They adopted a policy of economic asphyxiation, which has been repudiated by nearly every country in the world."

Council on Hemispheric Affairs
1444 I Street, NW, Suite 211
Washington, DC 20005
202- 216-9261

One of the most improbable victories of the year was engineered by the coalition of groups in Texas who fought off the nuclear waste dump slated for the Hispanic community of Sierra Blanca, in west Texas. The victory was improbable for three reasons: the nuclear industry usually gets whatever it wants; the opponents were poorly financed; and the advocates of the dump ranged from George Bush, Jr. to Anne Richards and Bernard Sanders. The fight was led by the **Sierra Blanca Legal Defense Fund** and they never once flinched from standing up to the likes of Sanders. Their message was simple: just because people are poor, brown-skinned and disenfranchised doesn't mean their communities can become the dumping groups for a more affluent region's toxic waste. The campaign against the waste dump skillfully united themese of economic and environmental justice. But they realize the battle is far from over. Now the waste merchants want to shift the dump site a few hundred miles to the northwest in the parched cattle country near the New Mexico border. The Sierra Blanca Legal Defense plans to continue the fight.

Sierra Blanca Legal Defense Fund
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